

A Corpus-based Study of Chinese RVC *qilai* and Its Interaction with State Predicates

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Abstract

This study expands on Xiao and McEnery's (2004) theory of aspect by investigating the interaction of *qilai*, whose main function is that of directional Resultative Verb Complement (RVC) meaning 'up/upward,' with verbal aspect and situation types. One hundred and fifty utterance featuring states, i.e. adjectival predicates, co-occurring with *qilai* were examined from lexical, sentential, and pragmatic perspectives. The data were retrieved from the Weibo collection included in the BCC Corpus (Beijing Language & Culture University Corpus Center). The survey revealed that when adjectival predicates occur with *qilai*, they undergo a situation-type change, from states to processes, therefore *qilai* should not be considered only an inceptive marker focusing on initial point, ingressive dynamicity and continuity, as proposed by Xiao and McEnery, but perhaps also a "situation-type-change marker." This study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the rather understudied structure 'adjectival predicate + *qilai*,' which is employed almost exclusively in colloquial registers.

Key words

Aspect, situation types, states, processes, resultative verb complements, inceptive marker

1. Introduction

Resultative Verb Complements (RVCs) are a distinctive and fundamental structure of Mandarin Chinese (hereinafter Chinese). They have been investigated by many scholars and they are typically included in classroom instruction and taught early on, but since they represent a rich and varied class, often times some generalizations and simplifications are made with respect to their functions. *Qilai* ‘up/upward,’ for instance, is one of the most used RVCs and its behavior presents some peculiarities that make it stand out from the group, precisely because along with “canonical” RVC’s function(s), it is also deemed to have the role of an aspect marker. Through the analysis of 150 tokens of the string ‘adjectival predicate + *qilai*’ (hereinafter A+*qilai*), collected from the BCC corpus (Beijing Language & Culture University Corpus Center), this study aims to expand on Xiao and McEnery’s (2004) claim according to which *qilai*, other than an RVC, is an inceptive aspect marker.

2. Aspect and situation types

Before discussing the role that RVCs and specifically *qilai* have in Modern Chinese, it is worth introducing and discussing the concepts of aspect and situation type. Although lacking proper tenses and tense morphology, Chinese distinguishes aspects, perfective and imperfective, which can be either expressed by dedicated markers, inferred by the context, or encoded in the lexical aspect of the verb itself. Comrie’s (1976) defines aspect as the way of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation, as opposed to tense, which is the time of a situation in relation to speech time or to reference time.

The perfective aspect looks at the situation from the outside in its totality as a single whole without decomposing the internal structure. Xiao and McEnery (2004:89-171) identify four ways to express perfectivity in Chinese, depending on the viewpoint: the actualization marker *le*¹ (hereinafter ACTL*le*), the experiential marker *guo*, verb reduplication, and RVCs. According to their description of the four devices, *le* serves as a default marker for the perfective viewpoint and it presents the event as actualized and terminated, though not necessarily completed², before the time of utterance. The notion of completion is instead conveyed by another device used to mark perfectivity, namely RVCs, which will be discussed in more depth in Section 3. As for the experiential marker *guo*, it characterizes a situation experienced before a particular reference time, whose final state no longer obtains. The situation marked by *guo* is disconnected from both reference and speech time, unlike that marked by *le*, which is actualized and put in relation either with reference or speech time. Lastly, the type of perfective viewpoint expressed by verb reduplication is considered delimitative, since it denotes short duration, transitoriness, and/or low iteration frequency.

The imperfective aspect, on the other hand, describes the situation from an internal viewpoint with the focus on either the initial or medial part or on a continuative stage following a given point. In all of these cases, a situation is decomposed into several phases and the focus is placed only on one of them; however, it should be noted that in any case, the final endpoint is excluded. Xiao and McEnery identify dedicated aspectual markers for each of these different phases: if the focus is on

¹ The aspectual marker ACTL *le* must be distinguished from the homophonous sentence final *le*, also called change of state *le* (COS *le*), which is a sentential marker.

² “The situation becomes a reality with respect to the relevant reference time. Actuality does not mean completeness; it simply presupposes the realization or actualization of a situation” (Xiao and McEnery 2004:113).

the initial part, the verb is followed by inceptive aspect marker *qilai*; if the focus falls on the medial part, durative *zhe* or progressive *zai* are employed; lastly, when the focus is on a continuative stage following the initial point, the verb is followed by *xiaqu*.

Along with the aspectual viewpoint, situation types are another fundamental component of the aspectual meaning of a sentence. Situation types represent certain conventional ways in which languages categorize the different states of affairs expressed by predicates. They express how situations unfold in time. Smith (1991, 1994) distinguishes five situation types, namely *states*, *activities*, *semelfactives*, *accomplishments*, and *achievements*, which differ from one another with respect to the temporal properties of dynamism, durativity, and telicity.

Table 1. Situation types and their features, according to Smith

Situation Type	Features			Examples
	Dynamic	Durative	Telic	
States	-	+	-	<i>cunzai</i> ‘exist’, <i>zhidao</i> ‘know’, <i>leng</i> ‘be cold’
Activities	+	+	-	<i>zou</i> ‘walk’, <i>ting</i> ‘listen’, <i>da qiu</i> ‘play (sports)’
Accomplishments	+	+	+	<i>kan yiben shu</i> ‘read to school’, <i>xie yifeng xin</i> ‘write a letter’
Semelfactives	+	-	-	<i>qiao men</i> ‘knock’, <i>paizhang</i> ‘clap’, <i>kesou</i> ‘cough’
Achievements	+	-	+	<i>dapo</i> ‘break’, <i>shuizhao</i> ‘doze off’, <i>kazhu</i> ‘get stuck’

In some more recent analyses, such as Huddleston and Pullum (2002) and Declerck (2006), the category of “processes³” was added to Smith’s five situation types; it includes verbs such as *change*, *grow*, *slow down*, *thicken*, *darken*, *get fat*, *get well*, *cheer up* and so forth. Processes, like activities and accomplishments, are [+dynamic] and [+durative], but they differ from these two categories in that they are non-agentive (thus always intransitive⁴) and they always involve an incremental change of a state, which implies a scale of some sort. This means that each stage of a process is similar to the preceding stage, except that it usually represents a higher or lower value on a scale. Processes can optionally have inherent endpoint, which means that they can be either [+telic] or [-telic]. The addition of processes to the traditional taxonomy of situation types is noteworthy as this category will prove particularly important when we examine *qilai* and its interaction with adjectival predicates in Section 5.

3. Chinese RVCs: taxonomy and uses

An RVC denotes either the phase, resultant state, or direction of the action expressed by the verb preceding it. This verb (V1) and the RVC (V2) form a composite predicate, usually referred to as resultative compound. Xiao and McEnery (2004:160) revised Li and Thompson’s (1981) classification of RVCs into the *cause*, *achievement*, *direction*, and *phase* categories and instead proposed the following alternate tripartite categorization:

³ This category was first proposed by Lyons (1977) in his quadripartite categorization of situation types that included *states*, *actions* (corresponding to Vendler’s (1967) *activities* and *accomplishments*), *processes*, and *events* (corresponding to Vendler’s *achievements*).

⁴ The category of *processes* includes only the intransitive reading of ambitransitive verbs such as ‘cheer up’ or ‘slow down’ (which in the transitive reading are to be considered activities or accomplishments).

(i) DIRECTIONAL RVCs are usually verbs of location or direction. Affixed to motion verbs, they indicate the direction of the action expressed by such verbs.

- (1) Ni xiang he yi bei kafei ma? Wo gei ni
 You want drink one cup coffee PRT? I to you
 na - guolai.
 take-pass-come(RVC)
 ‘Would you like a cup of coffee? Let me get it for you.’

(ii) COMPLETIVE RVCS emphasize completion and imply resultant states. They are either verbs or adjectives which, once employed as RVCs, might lose their original lexical meaning.

- (2) Ta ba xin xie - wan le.
 He BA letter write-finish(RVC) ACTL
 ‘He’s done writing the letter.’

(iii) RESULTANT-STATE RVCS focus on resultant states and imply completion. They are usually adjectives that retain their original lexical meaning, even when used as RVCs.

- (3) Chi fan zhihou, qing ba zui ca - ganjing.
 Eat food after, please BA mouth wipe-clean(RVC)
 ‘After eating, please wipe your mouth well.’

RVCs can attach to both monosyllabic and disyllabic verbs, as well as to dynamic and stative predicates; moreover, RVCs themselves can be mono- or disyllabic, dynamic or stative.

Table 2. Possible combinations of predicates and RVCs

	V1	RVC	RESULTATIVE COMPOUND
Dynamic Predicates	<i>xie</i> ‘write’	<i>wan</i> ‘finish’	<i>xiewan</i> ‘finish to write’
		<i>qingchu</i> ‘clear’	<i>xieqingchu</i> ‘write clearly’
	<i>zhunbei</i> ‘prepare’	<i>hao</i> ‘(be) good’	<i>zhunbei hao</i> ‘be ready’
		<i>qilai</i> ‘rise-come’	<i>zhunbei qilai</i> ‘get ready’
Stative Predicates	<i>xiang</i> ‘think’	<i>hao</i> ‘(be) good’	<i>xiang hao</i> ‘think it through’
		<i>chulai</i> ‘exit-come’	<i>xiang chulai</i> ‘come up with (ideas)’
	<i>gaoxing</i> ‘(be) happy’	<i>si</i> ‘die’	<i>gaoxing sile</i> ‘be overjoyed’
		<i>qilai</i> ‘rise-come’	<i>gaoxing qilai</i> ‘cheer up’

As previously mentioned, along with ACTL*le*, experiential *guo*, and verb reduplication, RVCs can be used to convey completion in the perfective viewpoint. Of these, they are actually the most flexible in terms of usage because they are compatible with all situation types with the exception of achievements⁵.

⁵ The other perfective markers are more selective with respect to the situation types they can combine with. For a more detailed description, see Xiao and McEnery (2004:89-171).

4. *Qilai*: meanings and functions

4.1 *Qilai* as an RVC

The verb *qilai* is a directional compound formed by a V1 *qi* ‘rise’ and the directional RVC *lai* ‘come’. It means ‘stand up, rise’ and it is still used in modern Chinese as a full-fledged predicate.

- (4) Wo zongshi hen zao qilai.
I always very early get up
‘I always get up early.’

As an RVC, *qilai* can be employed for different purposes and functions. Considering its original meaning as a motion verb, *qilai*’s basic meaning as an RVC is directional, expressing an upward movement. In this case, it is typically affixed to a dynamic V1 (usually an action) of which it indicates the direction.

- (5) Ba shou ju -qilai.
BA hand lift-qilaiRVC
‘Raise your hands.’

Another use of *qilai*, also derived from the directional one, is what Xiao and McEnery (2004) regard as a Resultant-State RVC: in this case, *qilai* conveys the meaning of ‘bringing together, collecting’. I argue that this use can be seen as a sort of metaphorical extension of the directional RVC because the act of ‘collecting, picking up’ encodes an analogous kind of directionality. It is perhaps not just a coincidence that the English translation of many of such predicates includes the preposition ‘up’ (cf. example (6) below or, for instance, predicate *zhengli qilai* ‘tidy up’).

- (6) Ta ba yifu dou shou-qilai.
he BA cloth all collect-qilaiRVC
‘He picked up all the clothes.’

Over time, the range of verb types *qilai* can attach to expanded, and it started to co-occur with verbs that do not necessarily allow for a directional reading. In the so-called *qilai*-marked middle construction (Ji 1992, Wang and Hu 2018), *qilai* does not convey any directional meaning whatsoever, which is similar to the English middle construction in terms of meaning and use.

- (7) Ni zuo de cai chi-qilai hen bu cuo.
You do DE food eat-qilaiRVC very not bad
‘Your food eats well.’ (Lit. ‘The food that you cook is not bad to eat’)

Xiao and McEnery (2004) call this use of *qilai* “evaluational” as it expresses a preliminary judgment on an action that has just been initiated. The idea is that the speaker, as an implicit experiencer, has a certain perception (which translates into a judgment) of the grammatical subject (e.g. ‘food’ or ‘report’) when the action expressed by V1 is performed or carried out.

4.2 *Qilai* as an aspect marker

The last use of *qilai* is different from those we have just discussed, which, in one way or another, all fall under the RVC’s umbrella. As mentioned in Sections 1 and 2, *qilai* can also function as a viewpoint aspect marker. Xiao and McEnery (2004:216-227) describe *qilai* as an aspect marker

signaling inceptiveness, i.e. focusing on the initial part of a situation. It is important to point out that the term “inceptiveness,” in Xiao and McEnery’s view, includes both the starting point and the portion following it; *qilai* marks an action that extends unidirectionally, i.e. forwards, irrespective of any endpoint, be it inherent or not. The verb preceding the inceptive marker *qilai* (hereinafter INC *qilai*) most typically, though not exclusively, is durative in nature, such as an activity or a state⁶. However, while the construction ‘activity V + INC*qilai*’ is well consolidated (and attested) in the grammar tradition, as well as discussed in scholarly articles, the same cannot be said about the construction ‘state⁷ + INC*qilai*’ (i.e. A+*qilai*), about which research is very scant and spotty. Even grammars do not usually mention it, as its use seems relegated to colloquial registers only.

When *qilai* is affixed to activity verbs, in general it is fair to consider it straightforwardly inceptive. It conveys the meaning of ‘start, begin’ and puts the stress on the initial point of the activity expressed by V1.

- (8) Dang nvhaizimen ting wode shenshi hou, tamen dou
 Just at girls hear my life-experience after, they all
 ku-qilai le.
 cry-INC*qilai* COS
 ‘When the girls heard my story, they all burst into tears.’

- (9) Wode laoban de shouji turan xiang-le- qilai
 My boss DE cell phone suddenly ring-CTL-INC*qilai*
 ‘All of a sudden, my boss’s cell phone started to ring.’

As shown by the examples above, ‘activity V + INC*qilai*’ can interact with both ACTL *le* and COS *le*. While the latter pairing is not problematic (INC*qilai* is an aspect marker whereas COS *le* is a sentential marker), the combined use of a perfective marker, ACTL *le*, and of an imperfective marker, INC *qilai*, might seem conflicting. Xiao and McEnery (2004) try to explain this apparent anomaly by suggesting to look at ACTL*le* from the perspective of the actualization of the action it marks rather than from that of the boundedness typical of the perfective aspect.

One last remark on ‘activity V + *qilai*’ is that verbs expressing planned activities usually are not compatible with INC*qilai*; in these cases, in order to attain the inceptive reading (i.e. ‘start/begin to’), verb *kaishi* ‘start, begin’ must be used instead.

The characteristics and features of the structure A+*qilai* will be discussed in the following section, along with the survey carried out on BCC corpus.

5. The study

The goal of the present study was to collect data about the use of aspect marker *qilai* in order to support and build on Xiao and McEnery’s (2004:220) claim that, as an inceptive aspect marker, *qilai* “coerces a stative situation into a dynamic one at the clause level”, which alludes to a change in terms of situation type. In particular, this survey aimed to further investigate the co-occurrence

⁶ Even though very infrequently, *qilai* can be affixed to semelfactives and accomplishments: in these cases, it is considered responsible for the derived readings of *iterative* and *actual inceptive*.

⁷ *Qilai* is not really productive with all kinds of state/stative verbs, for instance it sounds odd with stative verbs such as *zhidao* ‘know’ or *cunzai* ‘exist’, whereas it is productive with adjectival predicates, which are the focus of the present survey.

of adjectival predicates and *qilai*, since this construction has not been extensively studied and often goes unmentioned in the literature, perhaps because of its (almost) exclusive occurrence in informal and colloquial registers.

5.1 Corpus features and data collection

The decision to survey the BCC Corpus was dictated by its size (15 billion characters) and the availability of six diverse domains (e.g. press, literature, scientific journals, Weibo – a popular social network, etc.). Considering that the structure under analysis is most typical of casual and colloquial speech, a database that could offer utterances belonging to such register was needed. The BCC Corpus fulfilled this necessity because of its inclusion of a 3 billion-character collection of informal conversations amongst Weibo’s users. Other reasons for choosing this corpus are the swiftness of search methods, as well as the availability of statistics.

Out of the six BCC corpus’ domains included, only two, literature and Weibo, included tokens of A+*qilai*; in the other four, not a single token was attested, as they collect utterances taken from more formal registers. Ultimately, the choice to use data from Weibo was driven by the fact that, as a social network, it mainly includes instances of informal conversation, thus offering more up-to-date uses of *qilai* in social interactions.

One hundred and fifty tokens of the string A+*qilai* were analyzed. First, the total number of A+*qilai* tokens included in the Weibo collection was checked, then the 10 adjectives that most frequently co-occur with inceptive *qilai* were pinpointed. A severe disproportion between the first ranked adjective *hao* ‘good’ and the other nine was found, as shown by Table 3.

Table 3. The 10 types under scrutiny, with respective meaning and number of occurrences.

Type	Meaning of A	Meaning of A+ <i>qilai</i>	# Tokens
A+<i>qilai</i>	---	---	31,631 (total)
<i>hao qilai</i>	be good, be fine	get better, feel better, improve	12,564 (40%)
<i>kuaile qilai</i>	be happy/joyful	cheer up	3,702 (11%)
<i>qiangda qilai</i>	be powerful, be strong	toughen up, get stronger	1,447 (4.5%)
<i>kaixin qilai</i>	be happy/serene	cheer up, be cheered up	935 (3%)
<i>chengshu qilai</i>	be a grown-up, be mature	grow up, become more mature	830 (2.5%)
<i>manglu qilai</i>	be busy	get busy, get to work	662 (2%)
<i>jianqiang qilai</i>	be strong	toughen up	482 (1.5%)
<i>pang qilai</i>	be fat	gain weight, get fat	439 (1.4%)
<i>leng qilai</i>	be cold, be chilly	get cold, cool down	340 (1%)
<i>renao qilai</i>	be lively, be noisy	liven up	287 (0.9%)

Considering the statistics above, it seemed fair to analyze 50 randomly selected occurrences of *hao qilai*, 20 of *kuaile qilai*, and 10, likewise randomly chosen, utterances involving each of the other eight adjectives, for a total of 150 items.

5.2 Data analysis

The tokens were all analyzed in context; in other words, for each instance of A+*qilai*, the sentential and pragmatic contexts of use were examined. The meaning was therefore calculated considering several elements which could affect the interpretation, namely COS*le*, temporal adverbials and

markers occurring in the same clause as A+*qilai*, time reference of the sentence or clause where A+*qilai* occurs, and verbs (especially modals and auxiliaries) which recurrently precede A+*qilai*.

The goal in investigating the environment surrounding A+*qilai* was to retrieve evidence of the function of *qilai* as an inceptive aspect marker and, possibly, to individuate more details about its context and circumstances of use, especially when it is employed with adjectival predicates. Particular attention was paid to the issues of aspect and situation types. Ultimately, the aim was to suggest a more grounded characterization of *qilai*, alternative to the wide-spread description of it as a mere inceptive marker, conveying the meaning of ‘start, begin’.

5.3 Findings and observations

After collecting and surveying the data, several observations were notable. The first pertains to the behavior of adjectival predicates. Namely, when attached to *qilai*, these predicates undergo a situation type change from states to processes (in the sense of Huddleston and Pullum 2002, and Declerck 2006).

- (10) Tianqi leng jile, dimian dou dong ying le.
 Weather cold extremely, ground all frozen hard COS
 ‘It’s so cold that the ground is all frozen solid.’
- (11) Tianqi zhujian leng-qilai le
 Weather gradually cold-qilaiINC COS
 ‘It’s getting colder day by day.’

As shown in (10) and (11) above, when a state predicate such as *leng* is used without *qilai*, it simply describes a state, whereas the addition of *qilai* triggers the inceptive reading. In this context, the situation type of the predicate changes from a state to a process. A method by which to attest this change is the progressive test: cross-linguistically, states are not compatible with the progressive reading, but processes are.

- (12) Wo zhengzai hao-qilai /*hao, zhe shi lishi shang di’er zui
 I PROG good-qilaiINC /*good this be history on second most
 hao de shiqi
 good DE time
 ‘I’m getting better now, this is the second best period of my life.’

As shown in (12), the sentence does not work when *hao* ‘be fine’ is not followed by *qilai*. As a matter of fact, tokens of the progressive marker (*zheng*)*zai* preceding adjectival predicates without *qilai* attached were not found in the Weibo collection.

Further evidence in support of the fact that A+*qilai* is a process (and no longer a state) comes from the transitivity test. As previously mentioned, processes are all non-agentive, i.e. intransitive, therefore a direct object cannot follow the string by A+*qilai*, as displayed by (13) and (13)’ below. In fact, the survey revealed that causative verbs such as *rang*, *shi*, and *ling* ‘make, let’ frequently precede A+*qilai* as they represent an efficient way to insert a patient in the scope of A+*qilai*.

- (13) Zhi you rang ziji qiangda-qilai, cai keyi qu fangsi.
 Only have make oneself powerful-qilaiINC just can go
 fangsi.
 unconstrained
 ‘Only by making yourself stronger (i.e. toughening up), you can finally run wild.’
- (13)’ *Zhi you qiangda-qilai ziji, cai keyi qu fangsi.
 Only have powerful-qilaiINC oneself just can go unconstrained
 ‘Only by toughening yourself up, you can finally run wild.’⁸

Another distinctive characteristic of processes is the incremental change of a state which implies a scale of some sort. This was evident in all the examined tokens, as *qilai* when affixed to an adjective expresses an intensification of the quality denoted by the latter. This is attested by (14) below:

- (14) Faxian zhe ci kao le man fen, ta like jiu
 Discover this time test ACTL full score, he immediately then
 gaoxing-qilai.
 happy-INCqilai
 ‘After finding out that he got a perfect score on the test, he immediately cheered up.’

Gaoxing qilai, here translated as ‘cheer up (*intr.*)’, literally means ‘to get happier’ with respect to a previous stage (before knowing the results of the test) when the subject was not (as) happy. I suggest that INC*qilai*’s implication of intensification could even be seen as a metaphorical extension of the original directional meaning ‘up, upward’.

Another interesting finding, which somehow plays against the general claim maintaining that *qilai* is an inceptive marker, is that the string A+*qilai* can be preceded by the ingressive verb *kaishi* ‘start, begin’. If the function of *qilai* were to mark inceptiveness when it attaches to adjectives, as it does with verbs, a sentence like (15) would be redundant and unacceptable.⁹

- (15) Da qing zao qi dian ban zheng ge yiyuan dou kaishi
 Big clear early seven hour half whole CL hospital all begin
 manglu-qilai.
 busy-qilaiINC
 ‘As early as 7.30 am the entire hospital starts bustling.’

Lastly, the present analysis has ascertained that the default temporal reference encoded by utterances featuring the string A+*qilai* is non-past, because whenever discourse lacks adverbials or other devices conveying past time reference, A+*qilai* construction has a non-past reading. On the other hand, especially if the adjective has a positive connotation (e.g. *hao* ‘good’, *kuaile* or *kaixin* ‘happy’, and such), this construction typically receives a future interpretation, which also

⁸ In English, ‘toughen up’ allows for the reflexive reading with the anaphor directly following the verb, whereas in Chinese, if *ziji* ‘oneself’ is used as the direct object of A+*qilai*, the sentence is ungrammatical.

⁹ (17) is considered grammatical by all the native informants I asked, and many other tokens of ‘*kaishi* + A+*qilai*’ were found in the corpus (as shown in Table 4), whereas no instances of ‘*kaishi* + V+*qilai*’ were attested, thus leading to the interpretation that the function of *qilai* attached to a V is slightly different from that of *qilai* attached to an A.

entails the sense of wish and hope. In this case, A+*qilai* is typically followed by sentential marker *COSle* and is optionally (though recurrently) preceded by adverbials such as *kuai/jiu yao* ‘soon, be about to’, *zao (yi)dian* ‘soon’, and/or modal future markers *hui* and *yao*.

Table 4. The 10 types and their respective number of occurrences (and percentages) with verb *kaishi* ‘begin, start’, modals *hui* and *yao*, causative verbs, and *COSle*

Type	<i>kaishi</i>	<i>hui</i>	<i>yao</i>	causative	<i>COSle</i>	#Tokens
hao <i>qilai</i>	31 (0.2%)	2056 (16.3%)	372 (2.9%)	33 (0.2%)	579 (4.6%)	12,564
kuaile <i>qilai</i>	1 (0.02%)	77 (2%)	173 (4.6%)	138 (3.7%)	22 (0.5%)	3,702
qiangda <i>qilai</i>	5 (0.3%)	29 (2%)	37 (2.5%)	182 (12.5%)	37 (2.5%)	1,447
kaixin <i>qilai</i>	0	48 (5.1%)	45 (5%)	138 (14.8%)	101 (10.8%)	935
chengshu <i>qilai</i>	2 (0.2%)	61 (7.3%)	62 (7.2%)	38 (4.6%)	64 (7.7%)	830
manglu <i>qilai</i>	107 (16.2%)	8 (1.2%)	48 (7.3%)	124 (18.7%)	138 (20.8%)	662
jianqiang <i>qilai</i>	0	18 (3.7%)	83 (17.2%)	24 (4.9%)	12 (2.5%)	482
pang <i>qilai</i>	4 (0.9%)	22 (5%)	29 (6.6%)	8 (1.8%)	59 (13.4%)	439
leng <i>qilai</i>	26 (7.6%)	3 (0.8%)	25 (7.4%)	0	240 (70.6%)	340
renao <i>qilai</i>	41 (14.3%)	2 (0.7%)	4 (1.4%)	2 (0.7%)	99 (34.5%)	287

An additional remark may be made on the overall frequent co-occurrence of *COSle* with A+*qilai*, with tokens attested for all 10 types examined (although not equally distributed). *COSle* can be affixed either to the adjective, thus preceding *qilai*, or to the whole construction, thus following *qilai*. Both word orders are attested with no significant difference in distribution (respectively 2,244 and 2,156 tokens) nor in meaning and context of use. The default reading of A+*qilai* with *COSle* (irrespective of its position) is that of future time reference. *COSle*, however, routinely appears in past time contexts with past time reference inferred by the discourse or conveyed by some temporal adverbials.

6. Conclusion

The close observation of 150 ‘A+*qilai*’ tokens randomly selected from the BCC corpus yielded evidence supporting the existence of *qilai* as a marker that can be affixed not only to dynamic verbs, but to states (i.e. adjectival predicates) as well, though this structure seems still confined to informal and colloquial registers.

When *qilai* attaches to adjectives, it triggers a change in terms of situation type from states to processes by ‘forcing’ dynamicity into an originally stative situation. A progressive and a transitivity test confirmed that the new composite predicate, A+*qilai*, is a process and no longer a state in that it is compatible with the progressive marker but does not allow for a direct object to follow it; in other words, it is intransitive. The dynamicity typical of processes is also displayed by the fact that *qilai* expresses an intensification of the quality described by the adjective it attaches to. Furthermore, A+*qilai* proved compatible and productive with ingressive verb *kaishi* ‘start.’

Taking into consideration all these findings, I propose that *qilai*, when affixed to adjectives, could be more appropriately described as a ‘situation-type-change’ marker, rather than aspectual inceptive marker, which remains a suitable definition for *qilai* when it co-occurs with dynamic verbs as proposed by Xiao and McEnery (2004).

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